

*CONOCEPHALUS DISCOLOR* (THUNB.)  
(ORTHOPTERA) NEW TO WILTSHIRE AND  
OTHER NOTES ON BRITISH ORTHOPTERA  
IN 1985

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On 12 October 1985, c.11.00 hours, I found two stridulating male *Conocephalus discolor* (Thunb.) amongst long grass in an unremarkable field on the edge of Landford Common, South Wiltshire (SU 261180). Landford Common is continuous with the northern boundary of the New Forest. This appears to constitute the first record of this bush-cricket from Wiltshire. Furthermore, this is the first record of this species from an inland county; previous records being from Dorset, Hampshire, Wight, East and West Sussex. It is clear that *C. discolor* is undergoing an expansion in its range of distribution. Haes (1984) documents its recent discovery and spread within the New Forest. The New Forest is possibly the area best worked and known by Orthopterists in Britain (Ragge, 1965; Brown & Searle, 1974), yet the first New Forest record of *C. discolor* was made as recently as 1977 (Haes, 1984). Since then, scores of new sites have been reported within the Forest. In the late summer of 1985 this bushcricket was found to be one of the more conspicuous and widespread of the New Forest Orthoptera. My records are:—

East End (SZ 366982). 28.xi.85. On bog myrtle. Others: *Tetrix undulata*.

Keyhaven Marshes (SZ 317923). 28.xi.85. In tall grass. Others: *C. dorsalis*, *Chorthippus albomarginatus*, *Ectobius panzeri*.

Oberwater (SU 268028). 28.xi.85. On bog myrtle and ling. Others: *Metrioptera brachyptera*.

Oberwater (SU 265026). 28.xi.85. In quaking bog on long grass. Others: *Stethophyma grossum*, *M. brachyptera*.

Ibsley Common (SU 168102). 28.xi.85. On bog myrtle and ling. Others: *Omocestus rufipes*, *Ch. brunneus*, *Ch. parallelus*, *Myrmeleotettix maculatus*, *M. brachyptera*.

Nomansland (SU 263175). 12.x.85. On bog myrtle. Others: *S. grossum*.

Also on 12.x.85, I found *C. discolor* at Sinah Common, Hayling Island (SZ 703991) on gorse in association with *Platycleis albopunctata* and by Swanbourne Lake, West Sussex (TQ 017080) on rough chalk grassland amongst a colony of *Gomphocerippus rufus*. Thus, *C. discolor*, which was regarded as a great rarity in Britain only a few years ago, can now be found with ease over a vast diversity of

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habitats. All of these 1985 *C. discolor* were of the usual green form and none was hypermacropterous. By contrast, in 1984 I found many brown and/or hypermacropterous specimens in South Hampshire. Hypermacropterism seems to be a feature of an expanding population, as appears to have been the case during the hot summers of 1982-4 when *C. discolor* was seen to spread to many new sites, many specimens being hypermacropterous. Perhaps the cool, damp weather of 1985 inhibited the development of hypermacropterous forms in some way.

The common green grasshopper, *Omocestus viridulus* sometimes occurs as a beautiful variation, termed 'var. purple' by Ragge (1965), in which the usual green colour is replaced on the sides of the thorax and abdomen by a pinkish purple. There is a purple medial stripe on the dorsal surface of the pronotum. Var. purple has been recorded only amongst females of *O. viridulus*. This colour form is sufficiently distinctive and scarce to warrant special mention by Lucas (1920). I collected two specimens of var. purple in 1985: Exmoor, Somerset 6.vii.85 and Penkridge Bank, Staffs., 10.viii.85. One wonders if a combination of heathland habitat and cool, damp weather favours the generation of this colour form: these are the only two I have seen.

On 11.x.85 I collected a female scaly cricket, *Mogoplistes squamiger*, from Chesil Beach, Dorset and observed her in captivity for several weeks. She was discovered at dusk amongst stones at the head of the Fleet. This is the only known British locality for what is otherwise an insect of the Canary Islands and Mediterranean coast. Very little is known of its life history and habits. In life, *M. squamiger* is attractive and rather more cricket-like than the shrunken museum specimens would suggest. The ovipositor is a dull orange with a black tip. In captivity, the cricket was noted to be nocturnal in appearance, hiding under stones during the day. Sometimes she was observed climbing amongst sprigs of vegetation at night. She fed readily on damp bread, diluted honey and a dead fly. After death eight eggs were located; some thrust vertically into sand, some lying-flat on the sand, others wedged against the side of the jar. When seen under the light microscope at a magnification of x50, no obvious surface feature was discerned. These ova are of a uniform dull yellow, c. 1mm by 3mm. They are being kept under observation.

Good weather in September and October ensured that many Orthoptera were active late into the season. For example, at Spurn Head, Britain's most northern locality for *C. dorsalis*, a stridulating male was found as late as 20 October. My last Midland record was that of a colony of *Ch. brunneus* at Chasewater, West Mids., 24.x.85. In southern England some hardy Orthoptera were found well into November despite the onset of hard frosts in that month. My

November records for 1985 are as follows: Black Rock Gully, Avon Gorge, Bristol, 2.xi.85, *P. griseoptera*, many stridulating males. Brean Down, Somerset, 10.xi.85, *P. albopunctata*, one stridulating male; abundant and active *Ch. brunneus*; *Ch. parallelus*, one stridulating male. Brent Knoll, Somerset, 10.xi.85, *Ch. brunneus*, 2 ♂♂; *G. rufus*, 1 ♂ 6 ♀♀, confined to an area recently cleared of brambles. Westhay Moor, Somerset, 10.xi.85, *P. griseoptera*, one stridulating male. Black Rock Gully, 11.xi.85, *P. griseoptera*, several stridulating males; *Ch. brunneus*, two stridulating males. Brown's Folly, near Bath, 12.xi.85, *Ch. brunneus*, one stridulating male; *Ch. parallelus*, one stridulating male, one female; *P. griseoptera*, 1 ♀. Chapman's Pool, Dorset 13.xi.85, a temperature of -8°C being recorded at Hurn Airport the night before, *P. griseoptera*, *Ch. brunneus* (including one female var. green), *Ch. parallelus*, *P. albopunctata*, all four species being common, active and stridulating. Black Rock Gully, 15.xi.85, *P. griseoptera*, one stridulating male; *Ch. brunneus*, one stridulating male. Rooksmoor, Glos., 15.xi.85, there having been a light snowfall at this site on 9.xi.85, followed by several hard frosts, *G. rufus*, 1 ♀, moderately active.

Thus, despite exceptionally cold, wet weather early in the year, 1985 yielded a good many Orthoptera records later in the season. One wonders if *C. discolor* will continue to spread further inland.

In my room I have seven Wood crickets, *Nemobius sylvestris*, taken as nymphs in October. They have matured rapidly in captivity to become stridulating adults by early February 1986. Interestingly all seven matured into males.

### References

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### UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR OF THE ANT LASIUS ALIENUS (FORST.)

In a previous note (Robbins, *Ent. Rec.* **93**: 42) I reported the occurrence of *Lasius fuliginosus* (latr.) in a first-floor flat. In Sept. 1986 *L. alienus* also occurred indoors, though this time in a bedroom on the South side of the building. The insects had travelled up inside